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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL SL

SUBJECT: KOROMA'S GUINEAN STRATEGY IS TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

REF: FREETOWN 280

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (U) President Koroma's speech to the Sierra Leone-Guinea Joint Technical Committee on the Yenga border dispute effusively praised junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara. Koroma seemed proud that the countries have bilaterally resolved the dispute without assistance from the international community, and went on to laud Guinea's assistance during Sierra Leone's war period. He discussed Dadis Camara's soldiering during that period, and his time as a scholarship student in Sierra Leone, stating that "all that has happened to him today is a result of his presence in Sierra Leone." Koroma concluded his statements with blessings to both countries, and referred to Dadis Camara as his "brother the Head of State of Guinea."

¶2. (S) The tone of the President's statement is overly enthusiastic when compared to the relatively sedate comments made after the reftel bilateral discussions. Though Sierra Leonean government representatives have frequently identified an almost familial relationship between the two countries, Dadis Camara has never before been singled out as a "brother," let alone a brother to Koroma. Further, this is the first statement emboffs have seen in which President Koroma himself has identified Dadis Camara as the Guinean "Head of State." The origin of this amplification of enthusiasm is unknown, but is likely linked to the Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) ongoing concerns over national security, and desire to access wanted Sierra Leonean criminal believed to be harbored in Conakry. However, security sector contacts revealed today that they believe a counter-coup to oust Dadis Camara is a matter of "when" rather than "if," and stated that security preparations are ongoing. Thus, the argument that Sierra Leone must befriend Dadis Camara for the sake of preserving Sierra Leone's security appears counterintuitive, since even high-ranking GoSL officials believe that he won't hold onto the mantle of power much longer.

¶3. (S) As stated reftel, Ambassador had warned the Foreign Minister against being too forward-leaning in establishing a bilateral relationship with the junta. We note the UK and UN representatives are "softer" on this issue than the USG; we have reinforced our firm position to multilateral partners. Ambassador will also reiterate to FoMin and the President that Dadis Camara is not the internationally-recognized leader of Guinea, and that these kinds of statements of support may enhance their relationship with him, but at a cost of their own respect from the international community.  
PERRY